

Seattle Pedestrian Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, 11 March 2009

6PM-8PM, Seattle City Hall Boards and Commissions Room L280

1. Call to order and introductions (6:03pm)

SPAB members in attendance: Tom Williams (Chair), Mark Bandy, (Vice Chair), Celeste Gilman, Kristen Lohse, Jon Morgan, Paul Niebanck, Ben Smith, Leanne Do (Get Engaged), Lindsay Pesheck (SBAB liaison to SPAB), Vanessa L (new member), Christina B (new member), Seth Schromen-Wawrin (new member)

Absent: Howard Wu (Secretary), T Frick McNamara

SDOT staff liaison: Brian Dougherty

Presenter: John White (WSDOT), Steve Pearce (SDOT)

Public: Randy Earle, John Coney, Jacob, Eric Balliet, Emily Neff

Tom announced that Cheshiahud Loop Trail presenter, Gina Coffman (SDOT), was sick and cancelled her presentation.

There was no approval of the February 2009 meeting minutes

2. Public Comment (6:20pm)

John Coney: (former SPAB chair, member of various groups including Mercer Corridor Stakeholder Group and Uptown Alliance)

- Expressed support for the Mercer Corridor Project
 - Believes the project looks at a complete corridor in an effective way and is an important part of Seattle's urban center concept
 - Sees popular support for project despite criticisms from various sectors
 - New corridor accommodates projected population growth
- Thanked SPAB for support of the project, especially its pedestrian aspects

Jacob: (community member)

- Recognized that while there is much to think about at the moment, SPAB must remember pedestrians
- Sees many sidewalks that need to be repaired
- Wonders why we spend thousands on audible signals when we could be fixing sidewalks
- Would prefer tactile signage, like Braille, that clearly identifies location instead of audible signals

3. Viaduct Presentation (6:32pm)

John White (WSDOT) and Steve Pearce (SDOT) gave a presentation on the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Program

John:

- Suite of projects – selected by tri-agencies (City of Seattle, King County, Washington state), takes broader perspective, system-wide approach, with safety fundamental
 - Deep bore tunnel
 - Reconnects street grids at north (Mercer corridor) and south end (Spokane corridor)
 - Central waterfront seawall replacement
 - New central waterfront promenade
 - Transit enhancements
 - Tunnel will have no mid-town ramps; access only in north and south ends
 - One strategy for traffic management is filling in with Metro service enhancements at peak periods north, south and west of the tunnel
 - Aurora (north) and Fauntleroy (south) transit enhancements
 - **Vanessa:** What do enhancements mean?
 - **Steve:** Increased transit service
 - Street car
 - Replace central waterfront line with 1st Ave line – integrates whole street car network from Seattle Center to International District
- Tunnel specifics
 - Stacked with 2 lanes in each direction
 - 1 tunnel, saves money, pushes boundaries of technology
 - Rationale: minimize disruptions, keep economy in tact, traffic flow
 - 9,000 ft, < 2 miles long
 - Cut and cover portions at the ends
 - 60-200 ft deep, but majority 100 ft deep
- Timeline
 - Goal is late 2015 – aggressive schedule
 - **Steve:** Have to build tunnel first, then divert traffic, then remove viaduct, then start boulevard, so boulevard last
- Capacity
 - Current viaduct funnels, with 110,000 vehicles at south end ramps, but only 65,000 by Battery St. tunnel
 - Replacement program will have more consistent throughput than today, ability to carry more volume
 - Some trips quicker, some longer, some same, really depends where you come from

Steve:

- Pedestrian Aspects
 - Improved pedestrian environment on waterfront

- Removes noise, shadowing, view blockage of viaduct
- New promenade will be front porch of the city, reconnects downtown with Elliot Bay
- New space is 80 ft wide
- 4-lane surface street, similar to 1st Avenue
- Pedestrian access: goal is strong east/west connections, signalized intersections at every intersection
- Environmental Benefits
 - Storm water management improvements – brought up to code
 - New bike, pedestrian and transit connections
 - Seattle's challenging street grid funneled traffic through downtown- now putting underground
 - Surface transit option would have had some erosion to downtown quality of life
 - King County rapid ride investments
 - Challenges in Olympia to getting support for motor vehicle excise tax
 - Need long term funding source
 - **John:** with decreasing tax revenue, Metro needs other funding options; no miracle solutions but working hard
- Street Improvements
 - Spokane St
 - Improving connections to Port of Seattle, West Seattle
 - Currently narrow, substandard facility
 - Mercer Corridor
 - Still working on conceptual ideas; lots of complex objectives in getting onto and off of tunnel
 - Freeway-like facility (tunnel) transitioning into arterial facility (Mercer) in a way that respects the urban landscape
 - Roy will play a major access role to tunnel, so no pedestrian facilities
 - But Mercer will have pedestrian and bike facilities; signalized intersections; bulb-outs
 - Surface street expands to 6 lanes south of Colman dock, but less pedestrian demand there because of Port terminal
- Fiscal Responsibility
 - Total cost \$4.24 billion
 - **John:** \$400 million gap; continued analysis of tolling to cover the gap
 - Electronic, variable rate tolling
 - Fluctuates throughout day with demand
 - Chart showed breakdown of fiscal responsibility between city, state, county and port authority
 -

The viaduct presenters provided an opportunity for board members to ask questions about the project.

Randy: Holgate to King viaduct replacement?

John: Replace with 3 lanes side by side; still a structure to get over railroad; Royal Brougham to King will be reconfigured with bore tunnel, very complicated to match up, will be detours for some time but trying to minimize, lots of pressure in stadium district

Randy: Impact of deep boring?

John: Boring machine under 1st Avenue will cause vibrations, noise; will need public outreach program to prepare people

Mark: How much current waterfront planning stays the same?

Steve: Similar plans, 2 lanes each way with median turn lane; open space on west side for promenade, parallel parking on both sides so loss of total parking but not a high priority

Mark: Street car allocation?

Steve: No space gained since street car would have been in the middle of the lanes

Mark: What about east edge?

Steve: Current east edge of waterfront rough, mostly backsides/loading docks; we'll see a complete redevelopment with retail, restaurants; new edge will have 20-25 ft sidewalk and 15 ft (railroad) easement owned by buildings; maybe leave the easement and let property owners decide what to do with it; possibly pavilions, sidewalk cafes, but no parking; could create more interesting edge that way; current plan only accounts for up to the easement

Mark: Bike lanes/multi-use trail?

Steve: South end has both but in central section still an outstanding issue; current plan has bike lanes but multi-modal trail undecided, possibly part of promenade

Jon: Projected lifespan of tunnel?

John: Tunnels have longest lifespan; current downtown tunnel is ~100 years old; today's technology far more evolved, safe; designed for 100 years but who knows, no precedent for current tunnel technology; very sturdy, deep underground in glacial soil, gradual moves with earthquakes; BART system up and running 24 hours after earthquake

Kristen: Venting structures?

John: Fans at north and south ends, tunnel operation center /maintenance access an evolving process with range of possibilities; south end possible to shelter in large industrial property; north end more challenging; designers will consider neighborhood context, noise aesthetics

Steve: Ways to integrate include ground-floor retail, public art

John: Ways to make it look nice; goal is to minimize noise

Celeste: Watching this process for year, left last meeting about collaboration feeling hopeful; feel like hard work paid off; fine solution; hope it works and will be legacy to future generations

John: Agreed, hoping legislature will memorialize the decision

Steve: More to come on the pedestrian aspects of the project; central waterfront discussion won't get going until end of this year

4. Chesiahud Loop Trail (7:40pm)

No presentation, but Brian handed out trail maps, along with new bicycling guide maps. Gina would like to come back to discuss infrastructure improvements for the Chesiahud Loop Trail.

5. Annual Retreat Planning (7:42pm)

Tom: Retreat is typically first Saturday in May; T. has offered to host it again but cannot do Saturday mornings; so options are Saturday afternoon or different day

Celeste: Master Plan update: draft out in early May; mid-June wrap-up for public involvement

Tom: Possible preview in late April

Celeste: In computer lab

Tom: If Saturday okay, then we'll do May 2nd or May 16th from 1-5pm at Mithun; final decision May 16th – retreat focus is Pedestrian Master Plan

Kristen: Volunteered to coordinate potluck

6. SDOT Update (7:47pm)

Brian: SDOT Organizational Changes

- Bottom line: no more bike or pedestrian group by end of April; now mixed with Neighborhood Street Fund, Arterial Operations and Neighborhood Traffic
 - Increases group collaboration
 - Eases bottleneck
 - Brian will still be SPAB liaison
 - All groups will play a role in Pedestrian Master Plan

Jon: How many employees are there in SDOT compared to other departments?

Brian: Not sure, will find out

Ben: What happens to Pedestrian and Bike folks?

Brian: About 10 will be spread out; means news influences to other departments

Mark: Managers for new groups?

Brian: Eric Widstrand (City Traffic Engineer) and Charlie Bookman (Director of Traffic Operations)

Celeste: Re-organization has potential to be a good thing; 'complete streeting' the organization

7. Upcoming Agenda Items (7:55pm)

- April meeting
 - Pedestrian Master Plan updates – Barbara Gray and Jennifer Wieland (SDOT)
 - SDOT Sidewalk closure expert
 - If not, Gina with Chesiahud Loop Trail presentation
- Upcoming items
 - Signals – been over a year since they've been to SPAB
 - **Celeste:** have them present signals part of PMP
 - **Brian:** hopeful that they regulate PMP signals but not necessarily delegated role
 - **Mark:** maybe wait to see PMP draft, then ask signals how they plan to implement relevant sections of PMP
 - **John:** police and signals? Seems like they don't communicate; could we bring them together?
 - **Vanessa:** could we have a panel?
 - **Brian:** Ballard Rapid Ride – project manager
 - At 60% design – infrastructure investments of interest to SPAB
 - **Mark:** could be timely April conversation

8. Adjourn Meeting (8:03pm)